



DEPARTMENT of the INTERIOR

news release

Fish and Wildlife Service

For release: March 14, 1991

Megan Durham 202-208-4131

ASSISTANT SECRETARY HARRIMAN ANNOUNCES
GRANT TO COMBAT ELEPHANT POACHING IN ZIMBABWE

The U.S. Department of the Interior will contribute \$104,500 to help equip wildlife rangers in Zimbabwe's Zambezi Valley, where organized poachers killed 100 elephants in 1990, Constance Harriman, Assistant Secretary for Fish and Wildlife and Parks, announced today.

The grant will be made to the African Safari Club of Washington, DC, under the African Elephant Conservation Act of 1988. The African Safari Club is contributing \$61,600 to the project. Motorola, Inc.; Xerox Corporation; and Jason Empire, Inc., are contributing their products to the project at reduced cost.

"Zimbabwe is in immediate need of basic equipment to combat intensive, organized poaching of elephants," Harriman said. "The African Safari Club and the other participants in this partnership deserve recognition for stepping forward to help conserve Africa's wildlife heritage."

David C. Murchison, president of the African Safari Club, said, "We are delighted to support and help administer this important project, and we commend the Interior Department for approving it. The lower Zambezi Valley of Zimbabwe is one of a relatively few remaining viable habitats for the African elephant in sub-Saharan Africa. In view of the Zimbabwe government's strong commitment to protect it from commercial poaching, we are confident that the assistance provided by this project will be an important step in preserving this area for the elephant for many years to come."

(over)

Poachers crossing the Zambezi River from Zambia have already virtually eliminated the black rhino from the Zambezi Valley. Armed with automatic weapons, they are now turning to elephants. About 11,000 elephants live in the Zambezi Valley; there are about 65,000 elephants in all of Zimbabwe.

Poaching has drastically reduced elephant numbers in Africa over the past decade. In 1979, the total elephant population in Africa was approximately 1.3 million; it is estimated that fewer than 600,000 remain.

Zimbabwe's wildlife rangers are well trained but are lacking in basic equipment needed to carry out extended patrols in the bush. For example, rangers now use two-channel, hand-held radios to communicate with each other and their headquarters; these radios are not secure from being monitored by poachers. The new grant will replace these with 24 state-of-the-art six-channel programmable units which will allow security-coded transmissions. Motorola's International Markets Division is providing the units in cooperation with the African Safari Club.

Xerox Corporation is cooperating with the African Safari Club to supply facsimile and copying equipment urgently needed by the Zimbabwe Department of National Parks and Wild Life Management.

Jason Empire, Inc., of Overland Park, Kansas, will provide 40 wide-angle binoculars for presentation to Zimbabwe anti-poaching personnel under an African Safari Club award program.

The grant also will provide basic field equipment for Zimbabwe's wildlife rangers including flashlights, batteries, tents, sleeping bags, compasses, and other items needed for extended operations in remote areas.

The grant is the second to be made in 1991 under the African Elephant Conservation Act. Altogether, \$770,000 in Congressionally appropriated funds, plus matching grants from the private sector and foreign governments, will be made available to support elephant conservation projects in Africa this year. In 1990, the Department of the Interior provided \$350,000; matching grants brought the total to more than \$800,000 in funding for conservation projects in five African nations.

The African Safari Club of Washington, DC, is one of the oldest organizations of its kind in the United States. Founded more than 30 years ago, its membership is composed of people who have visited Africa on photographic or sport-hunting safaris and who support the goals of African wildlife conservation.